
State Government & Tribal Affairs
Committee

HB 1623

Brief Description: Counting absentee ballots.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton and Hudgins; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires absentee ballots to be returned to the county auditor by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election.
- Allows absentee ballots to be tabulated beginning 8:00 a.m. on the Monday immediately preceding the day of the primary or election.

Hearing Date: 2/6/09

Staff: Tracey O'Brien (786-7196)

Background:

As early as 1915 a voter was allowed to cast an absentee ballot if he or she was not able to be present to vote at the polls on election day. In 1933 voters with disabilities and voters over the age of 65 were authorized to vote an absentee ballot. By 1967 a county auditor could designate a mail ballot precinct if the precinct had less than 100 registered voters. By 1974 the Legislature expanded absentee voting to all voters who made a request, and by 1993 those voters could request to vote absentee on an on-going basis. In 2005 county auditors were allowed to conduct all elections entirely by mail ballot with the approval of the county legislative authority.

Currently, 37 counties conduct elections entirely by mail. Pierce and King counties continue to offer poll-site voting.

A voter may return a ballot by mail to the county auditor or a designated ballot drop site. If the county has poll sites open on Election Day, a voter may return the ballot to a poll site. Absentee

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ballots must be post-marked on or before Election Day. If the county auditor's office receives a ballot after Election Day that was not post-marked on or before Election Day, the votes on the ballot may not be counted.

Summary of Bill:

Absentee ballots must be received by the county auditor by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election in order to be valid. For out-of-state voters, overseas voters and service voters, the date on the return envelope to which the voter attested must be no later than the day of the primary or election in order for the ballot to be valid.

The tabulation of absentee ballots may commence at 8:00 a.m. on the Monday immediately before the day of the primary or election. The tabulation results must be held in secrecy until after 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed except for Section 6, which takes effect on July 1, 2013 (after section 5 expires).